



PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

UNTIMELY MEDITATION: NIETZSCHE ET CETERA¹

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ACTOR A

“[T]rue philosophy, as a philosophy of the future, is no more historical than it is eternal: it must be untimely, always untimely” (Deleuze 2001, 72).

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

We are told to accept the real.

But the “so called real” exists according to the logic of power.

It is that reality which has been generated and established from the point of view of power.

Let us not deceive ourselves.

This, the point of view of power, is our first nature.

We do not only inherit it.

It commands us to behave in conformity with it.

It wants us to be agents of *its* perspective on our lives.

That is why it tells us to become timely.

But philosophical thought is *untimely*!

It is always and again and again newly untimely.

It turns against its time—in favour of a coming time
which demands to be considered beforehand to make it come.

Philosophical thought *is* this turn of the times

when it starts resisting that

what it has told so far.

A *revolt* of time,
that is what the thinking of philosophy,
philosophical thought, does.
Thus philosophical thought,
as thinking the untimely,
is not just a theory of time;
locked up in scholarly discourses;
disciplined stored in safe cupboards of the ruling system.
It is a practice:
Practical work on creating a time
which will make a change of what has been so far.

It is true.
The powerful, they love us,
us, philosophy, arts, the researching sciences,
as long as we obediently serve economic progress.

Useful we are supposed to be,
timely we are supposed to be,
useful and *efficient* ...

Here Austria, in anticipatory obedience, runs ahead: The Ministry of Science has been incorporated into the Ministry of Economy. Under these circumstances the new name, *Ministry of Science, Research and Economy*, is little helpful.

The message is clear, it says: *Become timely!*

Make your needs subject to economic performance.

Their credo? If the economy runs well, everybody will be well!

This means net product = cultural wealth?

Voilà!

If stupidity feels well, the economy runs well ...

ACTOR B

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 'The Control of Activity':

"It is about establishing a coercive link between the bodies and the apparatus of production. The instrumental coding of the body is the purpose of this torture. Time measured and paid must be a time without impurities or defects; a time of good quality throughout which the body is constantly applied to the exercise. How can one capitalize the time of individuals? How can profitable stability be organised? By way of constant supervision and pressure by the prevailing capitalist modes of production—efficiency, increased efficiency, the transfer of economic principles of organisation onto all walks of life, global rule of economy—by way of this permanent constraint one tries to make sure the constitution of a totally useful time."²

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

But philosophical thought is untimely –
and the arts, do they not negotiate the untimely?
Not in the freedom of the arts,
in their untimeliness there lies the permanent power
of all contemporary art and philosophy.

Arts-based-philosophy, the alliance of art and philosophy, would thus be a field for the appearance of the untimely.

By artistic research questioning and researching the untimely, it works actively on creating a time about whose coming it is concerned, for whose coming it takes care.

Thus understood, philosophical thought is no theory.

It is a practice.

It moves time,

makes it roll.

Thought of this kind is movement:

A movement of time.

That is, a movement of conditions

from which we became,

from which we become.

Philosophical thought thinks what is coming,

even before it is there.

It jumps ahead to the future, pre-acceleration,
to open it up speculatively.
Thinking the untimely invites the coming to come.
It is always already the prelude of the future
which it welcomes.
Libidinous prelude,
lustful desire,
"fröhliche Wissenschaft"—gay science,
resistance against time,
in favour of a coming time.

Not without reason, Nietzsche's polemic pamphlet *Beyond Good and Evil* is sub-titled: *Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future ...*

ACTOR C

"Care for the event". The works of Erin Manning and Brian Massumi point into that same direction when, at their SenseLab in Montreal, they demand that arts and philosophy must "take care that in the future things will be different from now."³

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Jacques Derrida in his *Politics of Friendship* declares the sentence "Alas! if only you knew how soon, how very soon, things will be—different!—" (Derrida 1997, 31) being the paradox principle of a democracy of the future.

In this case, democracy of the future is not just meant to say that this mode of constantly arriving *Politics of Friendship* has not yet been realised. Rather, the genitive characterises the strange way in which such a kind of society understands itself. A democracy of the future will only be as long as it keeps itself open towards its own changeability and eventfulness.

On the other hand, people like Francis Fukuyama, for example in *The End of History and The Last Man* (1992), still believe in assuming beforehand that the global realisation of liberal democracies will have been the final end of human history. But it exists, this enigmatic restless zone of the untimely ...

ACTOR D

The becoming, without final end,
shouting *da capo* at itself,
for Nietzsche means man's return
to the innocence of becoming.
Changing constant becoming into constant affirmation.
Entering the never ending eternity loops of becoming,
that is the Dionysian frenzy of immanence,
the movement of eternity within itself,
the life of immanence.

Already Heraclitus had it this way: "The ordering [cosmos], the same for all, no god nor man has made, but it ever was and is and will be: fire everliving, kindled in measures and in measures going out" (Kahn 1979, 45 [XXXVII]).

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

"Alas! if only you knew how soon, how very soon, things will be—different!—"

Is this sentence already a statement?
Is it a demand?
Perhaps even an order?
Or a promise,
a stimulus,
an incentive,
an impulse,
a mainspring,
a temptation,
an enticement—?

Or is it a threat to those
who have lost faith in systemic change?

For example, we may imagine the different course the Greek government's negotiations would have taken against the background of the sentence "Alas! if only *you* knew how soon, how very

soon, things will be—different!” If, for example, Alexis Tsipras had told the representatives of the Great Troika something like this: “Your austerity policy is over. By way of your austerity measures you have ruined our country. Nothing of what you predicted has become true. You have backed the wrong horse, this is evident by the figures. The impoverishment of wide parts of our population tells against you, against your measures, also against your speculation apparatuses. I tell you, a different time has already started to come, a time which demands measures different from those you are still recommending. You will see. We are the ear of a future of a different kind, by resisting—in an untimely manner—the principle of the privatization of profits and the nationalization of depths. You have lost your ‘credit’ among the people.” Then, we hear the chief negotiators of the Great Troika counter always with that same sentence: “Alas! If you Greeks knew how soon, how very soon, things will be—different!⁴ ...We will tell you what is to come if the Greeks will not implement our conditions. Greece will drown even further in poverty and chaos. You will see, in the end we will have been those who were right. Things will come as we have predicted right from the beginning. You will see ...”

ACTOR E

Michel Foucault: *Discipline and Punish*. ‘Normalizing Judgement’:

“The whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable. What is specific to the disciplinary penalty is that which does not measure up to the rule, that departs from it. That is why at the heart of all disciplinary systems functions a small penal mechanism which, with its own laws, its specific offences, its particular forms of judgment, enjoys a kind of judicial privilege. By help of such a hierarchical and constant surveillance to increase productivity, the disciplinary power becomes an ‘integrated’ system which is inwardly tied to economy and the purposes of each respective institution.”⁵

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Another future is almost there.

A more desirable future

as a speculative, virtual promise.

Who sees it coming?

Who creates it?

Do we not all see it coming?

Who are we?

Who is meant by this we?

Derrida, in his *Politics of Friendship*, called the principle of his democracy of the future: “Alas! if only you knew how soon, how very soon, things will be—different!—” an *overhasty, teleiopoetic verdict* (Derrida 1997, 31–32).

ACTOR F

Quoting Nietzsche, Gilles Deleuze in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* writes that becoming active means becoming untimely—“acting in a non-present fashion, therefore against time and even on time, in favour (I hope) of a time to come” (Deleuze 1983, 107; cf. Nietzsche 1997, 60).

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

After all, is not the field of the future, which we anticipate speculatively,
always already marked by approaching death?
Beforehand, our death places us at our own graves,
in front of which one day *others* will stand.
What we virtually touch while anticipating death
is not only the issue of one’s own death,
most of all it is also the issue of survival;
of surviving our *heartfelt wishes* ...
Others will have survived us. That is for sure.
They will have outlived our lifetimes.
Will they be faithful, to the prelude to a philosophy of the future
we have intoned?

ACTOR G

Will it keep coming,
the heartfelt desire
which will have survived us?
What is the issue we tackle there?
Is it not the issue of the *life of immanence* as such?
There is a heartfelt desire we would like to pass over:
For all lust desires eternity, desires deep, deep eternity ...

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

In *Politics of Friendship* Derrida points out that, for this reason, a democracy *of* the future demands a particular kind of friendship. For they, the friends of this promise of a democracy *of* the future, know that this means the intra-time keeping of a promise which per se has a *posthumous dimension*. However not in the sense of the speculative promise of an unearthly transcendence. Rather in the sense of an earthly movement which, *by virtue* of the solidarity of those who will have survived us, will stay on the road because, shouting da capo, they again and again affirm this promise.

This way we are touching the crux
of Nietzsche's most abysmal thoughts,
the idea of the eternal recurrence of the same.

How to create a heritage, how to create a promise *of* the future
whose return could be actively affirmed
by coming generations?
Which *wants* to be actively affirmed,
without the need of ever regretting this decision afterwards?
Without remorse and regret?
Without a stomach that has become tired/mellow? ...

ACTOR H

Gilles Deleuze in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*: "The places of thought are the tropical zones, frequented by the tropical man, not temperate zones or the moral, methodical or moderate man" (Deleuze 1983, 110).

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Perhaps there are places
of the promise of a *deleveraged life*
where the hegemony of the interpretation of the word "credit"
in the economic-moral sense
of guilt, debt, belief, believer
will have been invalidated?

Where, rather, the old meaning of the word "credit"
has become common again,
which does not say anything else
than an object or person
is given our trust beforehand.
Thus where it is no longer about the charge
of guilt and debt,
not about a guilty conscience,
not about a devaluation of earthly life,
but about the life of immanence?
What has calculative thinking
made of this generous attitude?
Unconditional trust, beforehand,
in that what will have come,
even before we will have seen its face,
has become an exchange value ...

ACTOR I

University Law 2002 § 14 Sect. 1

"The University Law of 2002 commands compellingly the establishment of quality management. Furthermore, § 14 refers to university-external and -internal evaluation. [...] Apart from the efficiency and effectiveness of performance, also the latter's quality is a crucial issue of New Public Management. Quality assurance systems emphasize in particular the steering and control of quality. [...] The international trend moves towards the question if and how quality management systems can be implemented at universities and which elements of 'Total Quality Management' might be relevant" (Mayer 2010, 31–33).⁶

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Thought is dependent of those forces
which take hold of it.
Which power of thought thinks?
Powers of denial?

Reactive, poisoning powers?

Powers of resentment,

taking revenge on life

and separating it from

what it is capable of?

Or powers of affirmation,

of joy and thankfulness

to life?

Active powers,

inventive powers?

Creative powers ...

ACTOR J

Precisely like a tyrant needs sad spirits in order to succeed, the same sad spirits need a tyrant in order to be content and multiply, to take vengeance, by help of him, on the dullness of their lives (see Deleuze 1988, 25).

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Can the perversity of life,

by way of which it becomes its own deadly foe,

itself still be part of the definition of life?

What does it mean,

this real-existing self-contradiction

of life within life,

this death drive,

by which life turns against life,

against itself?

It appears everywhere,

in all cultures,

again and again,

as if the negation of life,

its wild destruction,
was part of the definition of life.
As if the lust of hurting,
the vengeance on life,
the will to nothingness,
destructivity was ineradicable.
Beyond the pleasure principle.

ACTOR L

"What characterizes reactive forces, on the other hand, is their opposition to what they are not, their tendency to limit the other: in them, *negation* comes first; through negation, they arrive at a semblance of affirmation" (Deleuze 2001, 74).

"Nietzsche calls this joint victory of reactive forces and the will to negate 'nihilism'" (Deleuze 2001, 75).

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Universalisation of a slave-like mentality,
a becoming reactive of the active forces.
Life losing its strength,
a dull poisoning of life,
after all an ascetic negation of the will as such,
a fanatic will to nothingness,
a frenzy of aggression against life,
against the earth,
against the lived body,
against the basements within the body,
this fanatic will to nothingness,
dreaming of a transcendent life,
to mortify carnal life,
this is what, by the death drive, discharges all over the world.

To rather want nothing instead of not wanting, in the depths of the bodies of such people there indeed must be “resentment with no equal”: “that of an insatiable instinct and power-will that wants to become master not over something in life but over life itself, over its most profound, powerful and basic conditions” (Nietzsche 1989, 117–118).

ACTOR M

“No one, I say, refuses food or kills himself out of the necessity of his nature; he does so because he is compelled by external causes. This can happen in many ways” (Spinoza 2000, 241 [4p20s]).

And thus, when it comes to such people, it is Spinoza’s ethical task to liberate again the hearts of all those who, by external serfdom, are prevented from giving expression to the nature of their own aspirations. So that also they will have good reasons to strive for maintaining their existence in the midst of the world.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

The strength of a force only derives
from its relation to other forces.
One force is *no* force.
Force is the criterion
regulating the relation of one to the other.

The tension in our relation to others.
A form of being-with, of being-together,
of being-in-touch with others,
that is what Nietzsche means by force.
An intensive way of the reciprocal,
mutual, physical, physiological
socialisation of bodies
which, re-lated to-each-other,
for-each-other, against-each-other, among-each-other,
are thus forming a structure of force.
An ensemble of power relations,
of will to power, as Nietzsche would have it.

How to generate a set of forces between bodies
which are capable of generating joy-fully among-each-other?
That was the crucial issue of Spinoza's *Ethics*.
Forces are no objects, they are bodies in touch.
States of becoming, of transition,
from one to the other
urging, extending,
running "from themselves".

Bodies surpass themselves,
towards other bodies.
When they pull on themselves,
they pull others with them.
They do not exist as such.
They only exist in relation to others.
As a mixture of forces, a fabric of forces,
as an assemblage of forces.

What is a gay science?
It supports exhilaration.
It strives for
stimulating joy among bodies.
Ethics are not morals,
ethics happen by the bodies touching
among-each-other, each-other.
A tactful touch which stimulates.
Deleuze called Spinoza the prince of philosophy
because he replaced an ethics of fear
by an ethics of joy.

Felicitas, joy survives.

It survives us

because *it* is the essence of our life.

Virtus, force,

mutual touch,

an affect,

an ecstasy,

a momentum of becoming,

of becoming-active.

Being-delirious

is the life of immanence:

a going-beyond-oneself,

surpassing-oneself,

capability of being-more-than-oneself.

ACTOR N

"The will to power, says Nietzsche, consists not in coveting or even in *taking* but in *creating* and *giving*" (Deleuze 2001, 73).

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Innocence of becoming may be read as an act of the cultural history of nature, in the course of which there happens the moral-economic debt relief of life. Nihilism considers becoming an object which must be atoned for and which must be resorbed by being.

The innocence of becoming, however,

wants the becoming-active of forces,

the triumph of affirmation,

of the self-affirmation of life

within the commonly shared field of a world.

ACTOR O

The eternal recurrence is not arbitrary.

It allows for the return of only

what we affirm and have affirmed.

Due to my affirmation,

my heartfelt desire,

it makes me return.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

What makes Zarathustra sick is the idea of circulation as the hurdy-gurdy song of the eternally same. The eternal recurrence of the same, instead, affirms the eternity-loops of becoming, the becoming-active of that living-being man which is capable of affirming earthly life. The mode of living which has the courage to face the reactive forces by creating its own values allowing for active, earthly, joyful life. This requires a new image of thought, the *Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, a *Gay Science* whose earthly body will be capable of modally imitating the life of immanence.

Do we know what a body is capable of?



Notes

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² Text-montage from Foucault (1979), 150–157. Cf. Böhler and Granzer (2013), 254.

³ Cf. Böhler and Manning (2014), 14.

⁴ Cf. Nietzsche (1966), 145. See also Derrida (1997), 31.

⁵ Text-montage from Foucault (1979), 177–179. Cf. Böhler and Granzer (2013), 257.

⁶ Passage translated by Mirko Wittwar.

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Biography

Arno Böhler is an associate Professor at the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Vienna. He is the founder of the performance festival Philosophy on Stage and currently heads the „Artist-Philosophers: Philosophy AS Arts-based-Research” research project at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): AR275-G21. He is the co-founder of BASE (research centre for artistic research and arts-based philosophy, India) and the director of the residence programme there.

Research visits at the University of Bangalore, the University of Heidelberg, at New York University and Princeton University. Invitations to visiting professorships at the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Vienna, at the University of the Arts Bremen, University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (Max Reinhardt Seminar) and at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. In 1997, together with actress Susanne Granzer, founder of wiener kulturwerkstätte GRENZ-film.

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